



**SOUTH DAKOTA  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Monday, Mar. 2, 2015

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**WELCOME HOME VIETNAM ERA VETERANS CELEBRATION**

**PIERRE, S.D.** – On March 27-30, 2015, South Dakotans will come together to pay tribute and honor the 27,000 young men and women from our state who served during the Vietnam War Era and those who gave their lives.

With the founding principles that “Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another,” leadership from South Dakota’s Vietnam Veterans of America chapters envisioned a statewide celebration similar to the 2006 dedication of the South Dakota Vietnam Veteran Memorial.

“Our Vietnam Era veterans fought for our freedoms, kept America safe and dedicated their lives to this nation. We are forever thankful for their unwavering strength and courage while fighting in the Vietnam War,” said Roland Lambert, president of SD State Council of Vietnam Veterans of America. “These celebrations will afford us an opportunity to join together to express our gratitude, remember their service and say ‘welcome home.’”

Although numerous communities are hosting events throughout March 27-30, Pierre has been the site selected by the State Council of Vietnam Veterans of America for their two-day salute to Vietnam Veterans. Festivities will begin on Saturday afternoon, March 28, at 1 p.m. Maynard Kaderlik, Regional Agent Orange representative, will conduct an Agent Orange and Toxic Chemical Town Hall at the Pierre American Legion Post 8 Cabin (520 Pierre St.).

At 6 p.m. Pierre Post 8 will host a celebration dinner for Vietnam veterans and their families. Free will donations will be accepted. At 7 p.m. participants will have the opportunity to partake in a pre-screening of “Last Days of Vietnam,” a PBS American Experience Production.

On Sunday, March 29, Vietnam veterans are encouraged to attend a “Welcome Home Breakfast” at McClellands Restaurant in Fort Pierre (902 Walleye Drive). Breakfast will be served from 7 a.m. – 10 a.m. At noon, participants will begin lining up for the “Celebration Run.” This parade, which starts at 1 p.m. will travel from McClellands in Fort Pierre to the Vietnam Memorial at Capitol Lake in Pierre. For more information on the parade, contact Tony Rae (605-224-5157).

The Remembrance Ceremony, to honor our Vietnam Veteran heroes who served, those who lost their lives during the conflict, as well as those who returned to their families and friends, will start at 1:30 pm at Capitol Lake. Special guest speakers include S.D. Gov. Dennis Daugaard and Larry Zimmerman, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.

Immediately following the ceremony, Pierre American Legion Post 8 will host a free-will donation celebration reception from 2:30 p.m. – 5 p.m.

“These heroes served honorably and bravely in Vietnam,” said Larry Zimmerman, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. “Unfortunately, they arrived home to a country in political turmoil, and never received the recognition they deserve. This ‘Welcome Home Celebration’ affords all of us an opportunity to show our unified gratitude for the service and the sacrifices that these veterans made on our behalf.”

“This is a great opportunity for us to reach out to our brothers and sisters across this state in an effort to share a hand-shake or a smile and let each of them know that they are appreciated for what they’ve done in service to this state and our nation,” said Roger Papka, SD VVA state chaplain.

Lambert is thankful that Vietnam Veterans in the Pierre area have taken the lead on this event. Support has been secured from the American Legion, the VFW, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America and the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

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